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## MadthrifTERS: An Integrated Social Media Marketing Campaign With An Emphasis On Secondhand Fashion

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**MADTHRIFTERS:**  
**AN INTEGRATED SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING CAMPAIGN**  
**WITH AN EMPHASIS ON SECONDHAND FASHION**

An Undergraduate Honors Thesis  
Submitted in Partial fulfillment of  
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By  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is a look into an integrated marketing campaign plansbook overview of my own Instagram thrifting brand account, Madthrifiers. Madthrifiers is a social media account dedicated to educating 18 to 24 year-old Midwest women on secondhand fashion while providing them an avenue to purchase it by selling thrifted items on the platform. One whole month of content was posted on a near daily basis. In March, 58 feed posts and 128 stories were posted. Before knowing how to reach Gen Z on this topic and encourage them to buy from Madthrifiers, several research questions were asked:

1. What is the consumer's true perception of fast fashion?
  - a. Secondhand fashion?
2. What is holding the audience back from secondhand fashion?
3. What drives the audience to get behind (endorse) something?

These questions were slowly answered through 45 secondary sources, three face-to-face interviews, one industry professional interview and 59 online survey respondents. By the end of the campaign, the account had a 238% follower increase with 58% of items sold. Read further to understand the strategic and creative process behind revitalizing the Madthrifiers brand.

**Key Words: Advertising and Public Relations, Social Media, Secondhand Fashion, Integrated Marketing Campaign**

**MADTHRIFTERS:**  
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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This world likes its food, cars and fashion fast. The latter of these is the world's second biggest pollutant.<sup>49</sup> Piles of clothing pass through secondhand stores on their way to the landfill.

Overconsumption in fashion is a major problem but it's not the biggest issue. The biggest problem? Gen Z sees the issue, but the benefit of convenience and price keeps them coming back.

To battle with the overconsumption giant, there needs to be options that are just as convenient and affordable - without destroying the environment. That's where MadthrifTERS comes in. Affordable pricing and sustainable sourcing is just the beginning of its benefits. The real perk of shopping with MadthrifTERS is its hand picked style that makes its shoppers feel like they were sourced with them in mind.

What does MadthrifTERS have that other fashion brands don't? A person behind that brand. A person that is dedicated to finding unique vintage and pre-loved items in the Midwest for the Midwesterner. Buying from MadthrifTERS means you are supporting local. It also means making a large impact both in and beyond the city you call home. Ditching fast fashion opens the door to the exhilarating and never-ending world of secondhand.

There's something exciting and beautiful when giving clothing a second life - or third or fourth. Its story did not start quick and stay there. It started somewhere, only to be loved again and

again by others. When shopping Madthrifiers, you join a community that is setting the stage for the rest of the world. Each member of this community owns the rooms they walk in with unique, secondhand fashion pieces that seem to never get old - pun intended.

By existing on Instagram, the very platform that 73% of Gen Z spend their time<sup>39</sup>, Madthrifiers will meet the target in their beloved digital space. Through this month long social media campaign, Madthrifiers will intersect fashion tips, secondhand fashion awareness and merchandise sales to prove to the audience that staying trendy and secondhand are not mutually exclusive.

## **BUSINESS GOAL**

Sell 50% of merchandise within a week of posting throughout March.

## **BRAND CHALLENGE**

The consumers are convinced that fast fashion fulfills their longing to belong while providing fast, cheap and easy solutions to trends but it has a negative environmental and human impact.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- Increase followers from 147 to 500 by the end of March.
- Release 4 sale drops with 8+ items.
- Boost Instagram reel views to 500+.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is the consumer's true perception of fast fashion?
  - a. Secondhand fashion?
2. What is holding the audience back from secondhand fashion?

3. What drives the audience to get behind (endorse) something?

## **METHODOLOGY**

- 59 online survey respondents
- 45 secondary sources
- 3 face-to-face interviews
- 1 Industry professional interview

To fully understand the secondhand industry and Gen Z's perception of it, vast research was done. For this campaign, research was necessary to learn about business social media trends, consumer trends, industry trends and information about the market. A series of social media survey stories were posted in the middle of the campaign after new followers were gained. This gave insight on the current followers base - who they are, what they like and their preference on the account content. Interviews were done with several women in Lincoln, NE to further understand their understanding of secondhand fashion. The conversation was furthered with Gabrielle, the owner of gabgrabs, which is an Instagram thrifting account with over 10K followers. She provided written feedback on the industry and her personal experience as a small thrift business owner. Most importantly, 45 secondary sources were used to influence every step of the Madthrifiers experience from what colors resonate with older members of Gen Z on Instagram posts to understanding where textiles go when consumers are done with them.

## **COMPANY ANALYSIS**

Madthrifiers is a thrift & secondhand store that began in 2019 that operates fully through social media. The mission is to make secondhand fashion accessible to anyone, regardless of their style background. With a vision to become top of mind for consumers in Lincoln, NE when shopping secondhand, Madthrifiers values authenticity, loyalty and expression. The store currently has no formal financial operations and while profit is made, it is being used to invest in

inventory, shipping materials and promotions. Inventory is collected through donated clothing from friends and family as well as buying items from local thrift stores. The brand is of a small margin of social media thrift stores that target 18-24 year-olds in Lincoln, NE. While there are more options for those who love to rock vintage style, there is a lack for the average 20-something that wants to fit in with current trends. Madthriftrers will provide current Gen Z fashion styles while also showing the target how to work vintage styled pieces into their wardrobe. Since 2019, the store has made 150+ sales with customer reviews including "Amazing every time!".

## **PRODUCT ANALYSIS**

Madthriftrers meets the target where they spend their time to provide easy access to one-of-a-kind clothing. Selling on social media creates a seamless experience for consumers without having to leave the app they love to shop sustainably.

### **Features**

- Current trends
- Unique, one-of-a-kind items
- Affordable prices for unique finds
- Social media selling
- Venmo is utilized
- Local pick-up
- Accessibility for the consumers where they spend their time

### **Benefits**

- Convenience
- Feeling stylish and sustainable
- Save the time it takes to thrift for goodies

- Exclusive style
- Sense of belonging to the sustainable clothing community

## **BRAND ANALYSIS**

Although Madthriftrers joins a wide landscape of online secondhand accounts, it is breaking through to a more niche, Midwest audience that may not have experienced secondhand clothing in a fashionable light before. Individualistic is the brand's top personality. Madthriftrers is not yet top of mind for the target, although initiatives like giveaways and consistent posting will increase followers and engagement.

### Strengths

- One of only a few social media thrifting accounts to reach the local target
- Sells top brands and current trends
- Owner is Integrated within the target audience daily
- Positive reviews from customers

### Weaknesses

- Low brand awareness
- No formal financial plan
- Low promotional budget
- Lack of formal payment/purchasing options

## **MARKET ANALYSIS**

In 2019, the global market value of secondhand and resale apparel was estimated at about \$28 billion.<sup>19</sup> In fact, it is projected to triple within the next 10 years to \$80 billion in 2029.

Secondhand fashion expanded 21 times faster than other retail in 2019.<sup>20</sup> The secondhand



fashion industry is drastically influencing fast fashion, which promotes high production of clothing, fast distribution and tempts consumers to buy in bulk for cheap. Fast fashion is only suspected to grow 20 percent in the next 10 years while secondhand fashion surpasses with 185% growth. While thrift stores are included in this category, resale platforms assist with the large growth. Fashion flipping is the term coined to describe those who buy secondhand and resell, which has emerged as a recent trend with “the digital resale market quickly becoming the next big thing in the fashion industry”.<sup>20</sup> Consumers environmental consciousness is driving the fashion industry, which has had a consistent reputation of treating workers poorly and contributing to pollution and waste.

## **CONSUMER ANALYSIS**

The target audience includes 18 to 24 year-old women in the Midwest. Madthrifter's current followers base has 73% in this age range with 63% being from Lincoln, NE. Women currently make up 96% of its followers.<sup>35</sup> From a direct Instagram story survey on the account, 58% of the surveyed audience considered themselves thrifty with 92% liking vintage finds. Followers described their style as trendy, girly, fun, simple and boho.<sup>35</sup>

The target is motivated to buy clothing that is trendy, affordable and easy.<sup>40</sup> When buying secondhand, they value name brands and unique pieces that follow current trends. As college students and young professionals, they find value in the small things in life outside of their busy schedules. They want an outlet to express themselves whether that be an activity, hobby, opinion or specific interest. While conscious of the environment they can't justify not buying fast fashion because of how relevant it is among the age group.<sup>40</sup> The consumers are fully integrated digital natives that use media to connect, shop, share, stay informed and share what they care about. While the secondhand shopping experience used to live within the idea of dirty, used clothes at Goodwill, the target has a misguided perception of the industry. The audience has a high value on individualism and this traces over into what they buy.<sup>41</sup> Most consumers join

Madthrifiers at the very beginning of the consumer journey; awareness or consideration. They look for authenticity through a brand before buying and advocating.<sup>42</sup> For the target, Madthrifiers offers local pride, providing unique pieces in their very own city. Prices aside, supporting local is something that the target can get behind.<sup>43</sup>

## **COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS**

When considering Madthrifiers competitors, it's important to look not only at other thrift services but also any platform that its followers spend their time and money. The United States thrift store market size is worth \$10 billion with 25,225 businesses.<sup>21</sup> From direct social media thrift businesses to Goodwill to Marshalls, Madthrifiers is in for a good fight.

### Goodwill

First off, Goodwill, the top national thrift store proves to be a direct threat. While some of the Madthrifiers merchandise is sourced here, this would be an easy place for consumers to shop secondhand themselves. With Goodwill's national presence, a notable Youtube influencer among Gen Z, Emma Chamberlain, willingly posts videos of her thrift hauls here.<sup>15</sup> Goodwill uses goods to make an impact on the communities by eliminating barriers to opportunity. Its driving force isn't necessarily to make money off of secondhand items but to provide jobs and opportunity to those in the community. Their prices are fair and affordable for all and they have a strong brand recognition at 92%.<sup>22</sup> While Goodwill is a notable brand in the thrift industry, it relies on quality donations and word of mouth to be successful. And, for the consumer that doesn't necessarily have an eye for fashion, Goodwill feels like a dirty and stressful experience.<sup>22</sup>

### Gabgrabs

A clear direct competitor for Madthrifiers includes any and all Instagram thrift businesses. The market size for this industry is unaccounted for but it is no secret that it is booming. Instagram

thrifters such as @gabgrabs have accumulated 10K followers from across the United States who simply want to buy the clothes she sources.<sup>34</sup> Since 2018, gabgrabs has posted styled drops with thrifted items. The owner, Gabrielle, has become the face of the brand. People feel a personal connection with her as she fills her followers in on her personal life while interacting with every like, comment and purchase. With a distinct colorful vibe, gabgrabs stands out amidst other online thrifters. You know what to expect from her - positive sentiments and unique items available for purchase. With only a few items posted at a time, Instagram thrifting creates a sense of urgency for consumers - if there is a notable thrifter who finds a unique item and it is only available to one person, consumers want it. While Madthrifters follows a similar business model, gabgrabs has the advantage of being relevant in the community and never missing a beat by dedicating the account as a part-time job. Although, to the target audience in the Midwest, her account may be unknown and Madthrifters personal knowledge of the community and people remains an opportunity.

### TJX companies

Lastly, TJX companies consisting of Marshalls, TJMaxx and Homegoods compete for the audience's time and money. In 2020, TJX sales revenue was \$41,717.<sup>44</sup> With the tagline, "Never pay full price for fabulous" TJX stores provide branded clothes at a cheaper price. While consumers can find designer items at a fraction of the cost, the company has little control over what items are in the store.<sup>24</sup> As the second largest off-price family apparel retailer, Marshall's makes itself known. Weaknesses such as low brand awareness and slow customer service hinder consumers from shopping with TJX.<sup>24</sup> Similar to Madthrifters, TJX stores provide fashion trends at a good price, making it accessible to a wider financial group of people. They commit to ethical sourcing in their supply chain.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

1. The target is ethically conscious.
2. The target values individuality and self-expression.
3. The target turns to the digital landscape for their personal and buying needs.

## **INSIGHT**

The target wants to make a big difference by making small impacts.

## **KEY MESSAGE**

By purchasing from MadthrifTERS, you leave the world a better place.

## **TARGET AUDIENCE PROFILE**

Meet the **Expressionistas**. They express their individuality through fashion and look for the next grassroots trend to hop on before everyone else joins. Expressing their values through the way they source fashion is important to them. Expressionistas seek to be stylish in their *own* way.

Niya is a recent college grad from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. While her parents assisted with her financial state throughout college, this is the first time in her life that she is on her own. She got her first job as an elementary school teacher in Nebraska. With a mask mandate, she values expressing her personality to her students through her wardrobe. She has eliminated single-use plastics in her life. Although she is making a full-time salary, she is conscious about her spending habits. After working 40+ hours per week, Niya looks forward to hanging out with her friends on the weekends, having patio drinks in the Haymarket. When it is time to leave work, she seeks any outlet that allows her to take a break.

## **BRAND PERSONALITY**

MadthrifTERS brand archetype is The Creator. MadthrifTERS personality combines innovation with creativity. Its platform exists to provide a new perspective on fashion and the industry while

allowing users to get in on the deal. It's fun, colorful and encourages consumers to express themselves.

## **POSITIONING STATEMENT**

For Expressionistas, Madthriftr fosters community and convenience around secondhand fashion.

## **BRAND TONE**

Empowering, relaxed, confident, passionate

## **BRAND HEADLINE**

Wear Your Community Makes An Impact

## **TACTICS**

Madthriftr runs solely on Instagram for many reasons. Although the app is not traditionally wired to support thrift businesses, it's opportunity for connection and community is more appealing to Gen Z than resale platforms.<sup>27</sup> With 14.5% of global active Instagram users are women 18-24, it's a perfect place to reach the target where they already spend their time.<sup>45</sup> The platform has become one of the biggest social networks across the world among young adults and ranked third in photo-sharing apps in the United States. Teens confessed to checking their social media hourly or more and feeling more confident, popular and better about themselves because of it.<sup>45</sup>

Apps like Poshmark and Depop are becoming less desirable because it feels less personal. On Instagram, you can cultivate a community to make consumers feel like they are buying from a friend. Streetwear resellers took Instagram by storm, being the first to use the app for selling

sneakers and apparel. Gen Z views streetwear as authentic, so following in their footsteps is sure to reach the target.<sup>46</sup> Instagram has transitioned to a platform that houses many brands, resembling a digital shopping mall.

Heading to the digital space to make money is no new phenomenon for the target with 86% of young Americans wanting to become an influencer.<sup>47</sup> Bidding on Instagram increases user engagement with messages filling the comments section. This is a great opportunity to break through the Instagram algorithm and be top of the target's feed. With a large community of thrift resellers on the app, there is a lot of support. Accounts with a large following offer paid shoutouts on their page for smaller accounts to gain visibility among the target.<sup>47</sup>

## **REVITALIZED BRAND IDENTITY**

Core identity: Secondhand and sustainably sourced fashion products and awareness

Extended identity: Products are sourced sustainably, products sold are secondhand, ease of online sales, personable interactions due to using social media

Brand essence: Low price tag, high fashion

Brand as product:

- Product scope: Secondhand clothing and fashion
- Product attributes: Madthriftr offers a personal style experience
- Quality/Value: Affordable
- Uses: Madthriftr is the affordable and local alternative to fast fashion
- Users: Young and stylish Midwesterners
- Origin: Lincoln, NE

Brand as organization:

- Local vs. Global: Local to Lincoln, NE
- Organization attributes: Online, reachable, customer focus, local orientation

Brand as person:

- Personality: Fun, trendy, creative, frugal, lighthearted, fashion forward, energetic, consumption conscious, young
- Customer/brand relationships: Madthrifiers is like an outgoing friend - encouraging you to get outside your box, support what's right and set the trends for the group

Brand as symbol:

- Visual image and metaphors: Bright blue packaging and bright colors on posts
- Brand heritage: Thrifted since 2013, Sold since 2019.

Brand vision: To make secondhand fashion accessible and desirable.

- Proof points:
  - Products are sustainable and follow recycled trends
  - The brand posts content other than selling items to increase consumer awareness of secondhand fashion and how it fits in their daily lives

Value proposition: The personality is the product

Emotional benefit: Feel empowered by saving money, shopping sustainably and treating yourself

## **MEDIA SCHEDULE AND ENGAGEMENT**

### Owned

As a brand, the average posts on Instagram per day is 1.5.<sup>48</sup> Creating a consistent pace of posting gives followers a pattern of what to expect when following. In March, I posted 58 times on the feed with a combination of photos, vidoes, carousels and reels along with keeping up with stories. Reels provide high reach as they can be expanded outside of your followers own feeds. Among the surveyed followers on Madthriftr, 92% said they wanted to learn more about secondhand fashion and 98% said they wanted to learn fashion tips.<sup>35</sup> The content included information about the secondhand fashion industry, some of my personal fashion tips and items for sale.

### Earned

Madthriftr gained earned media on Instagram through customers sharing their purchases on their personal accounts as well as followers sharing giveaway posts to their feed or through DM's.

### Paid

As Madthriftr integrated itself into the Instagram thrift community, it participated in paid shoutout opportunities. Shoutouts on two different pages were purchased to reach the accounts wide audience of 10K+. A few followers were gained through these opportunities.

(SEE CONTENT PAGE FOR MEDIA SCHEDULE)

## **EVALUATION + RESULTS**

Running from March 1 to March 30th, 2021, Madthriftr posted a total of 58 posts on the feed and 128 story posts including videos, pictures, reels and carousel posts. With 34 of the 58



merchandise items posted, 58% sold. This surpassed the main business goal of selling 50% of merchandise within one week of posting. Four drops were posted within the month ranging from nine to 20 items posted on Madthriftr's feed and story. When making a purchase, consumers used Venmo to pay and Madthriftr's would collect pick-up or shipping information from the user through DM's. With content posted on a near daily basis, Madthriftr's didn't skip a beat with the audience. Here's a look at account metrics from the month of March.

- 351 followers
  - Up by 238% from previous month
- 58 posts and 128 stories
- 2,745 accounts reached
  - Up by 342% from previous month
- 44,732 impressions
  - Up by 698.7% from previous month
- 1,859 profile visits
  - Up by 219.4% from previous month
- 1,365 content interactions
  - Up by 144.6% from previous month

Madthriftr's gained over 200 followers in the one month campaign but did not meet the goal of 500 followers. Followers increased most during giveaways, so doing more throughout the campaign could have bumped followers even more. Two reels were posted that gave sneak peeks to two of the drops, with one receiving over 2K views. Using a popular audio could have aided in the high views. Four main topics were highlighted when posting including fashion tips, awareness on secondhand fashion, drop items and giveaways. The first giveaway post had a high reach of 702 with 202 profile visits. This post offered high follower interaction, due to having an incentive. This post had the highest comments with 287, was sent 26 times, saved 5 times

and had 127 likes. Another observation was that posts featuring myself received higher likes than posts without a person in them. This shows that people are drawn to people and seeing styles in action. This campaign has set a defined purpose for Madthrifiers and proven the consumers' needs in this industry.

Further plans from this campaign include consistent drops on the account and keeping staying highly active. An opportunity in the future would be to utilize the selling function integrated into the Instagram app to make it even easier for Expressionistas to buy products on their own.

Since March, I've already bought several shoutouts, had a personal DM conversation with a successful thrifter with 6K followers and received personal interview responses from another with 10K followers. There is no lack of support to go around with the community, as we all have the same goal - make a dent in the global warming phenomenon.

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